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Littleton Town Hall
(Littleton Center for Cultural Arts)
2450 West Main Street
Littleton
Arapahoe County
Colorado

HABS No. CO-34

P H O T O G R A P H S

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE +
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

AMERICA'S CITY HALLS PROJECT

Name: Littleton Town Hall

Secondary Name: Littleton Center for Cultural Arts

Location: 2450 West Main Street, Littleton, Arapahoe County, Colorado

Present Owner: City of Littleton, 2255 West Berry Avenue, Littleton

Present Occupant: Littleton Cultural Arts Foundation, Inc.

Present Use: arts center

Significance: The Littleton Town Hall is one of Littleton's most significant buildings. The building has been associated with the community as the headquarters for the town government and community gatherings since its construction in 1920 and it is the most significant of three Littleton structures designed by Jules Jacques Benoit Benedict, a major Colorado architect and Littleton resident.

Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: 1920. A bond issue for funding the new town hall was approved by Littleton voters on April 1, 1919. The cornerstone laying then occurred on January 31, 1920, with the Masons of the Grand Masonic Lodge of Colorado leading the ceremony. Sources for this information include issues of the town's newspaper, the Littleton Independent.

2. Architect: Jules Jacques Benoit Benedict (1872-1948) was designated architect for the building by the Town Council in July 1919. He was respected for the beautiful work he had done on the Littleton Library, and it was felt that he would, as a Littleton resident, work harder to make the town hall an architecturally distinctive building.

Benedict was a prominent Denver architect who was renowned for his period architecture and his fine attention to detail. He attended the Beaux-Arts School of Architecture in Paris, served in the American Armed Forces, and then settled in Denver with his wife. Many regarded Mr. Benedict as the foremost and most cultured artist architect of the West. He also impressed people as a highly practical engineer. He was a man with public spirit and a desire for a greater and more beautiful Denver.

3. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The building contract was given to William Sorenson in August, 1919. The terra cotta for the front facade was sold to Littleton at cost by the Denver Terra Cotta Company, and men were sent out to oversee its installation for free. The company had been encouraged in this by Mr. Benedict, who was aware of Littleton's lack of money, yet strong desire to have an impressive town hall. The exterior cast iron lamps were made and donated by Mr. Benedict himself.

4. Original Plans and Construction: The Littleton Town Hall was designed by Jules Jacques Benoit Benedict as a multipurpose town hall in 1920. Its facade is identifiably of the Italianate order due to use of small-scale ornamentation, shadow-forming molding, cast iron, roof tiles, and an arched window design. The pointed lancet arches originally formed an arcade on the ground floor. The west arch framed the entrance to the fire house where the town's only hook and ladder truck was kept.

Although the building was inspired by Northern Italian examples, it has a characteristic local expression in detail and materials. The state flower, the Columbine, was conventionalized into the seven horizontal bands of incised ornament of the second story. The Rocky Mountain eagle was also introduced in the lunettes over the second story windows. The pointed arches of the ground floor arcade, the tops of the lamps, balcony grilles, second story windows, and the double bracketing of the cornice, all suggest aspiration, purpose, and action.

5. Alterations and additions: Major revisions to the building occurred on several different occasions, the first being in the 1950's. While most of the modifications were on the interior to provide for office space, the three pointed lancet arches at the entrance were enclosed. This was done with stucco and glass and provided further room for offices.

During World War II a small green surveillance tower was constructed on top of the building. Remodelings in the 1950's and 1960's partitioned all the space on both floors in addition to closing the archways.

B. Historical Context

J. J. B. Benedict designed the Town Hall when Littleton's population was 1,600. The design satisfied the expressed need for a building with a large assembly hall, offices for town officials and fire fighting equipment, and the desire to have some expression of the town's development during the sixty year period preceding the construction of the Town Hall.

Upon completion, the building was described as the finest architectural example of a town hall for a small community in the country. As such, it was one of the first buildings designated on the city's new historic preservation ordinance in 1972. The Town Hall continued in use as the center for Littleton's government and community gathering place until 1977, when the City of Littleton occupied a new office building.

A non-profit corporation, the Littleton Center for the Cultural Arts, has a long-term lease on the Town Hall from the City of Littleton for the purpose of restoring the exterior of the building and adapting the interior space for a community arts performance center.

Part II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. Description of Exterior: The Littleton Town Hall is a two-and-one-half story rectangular-shaped structure with a 50-foot frontage. Mr. Benedict's work was influenced by the renaissance works of Puzin and Palladio. His design of the city hall was inspired by the Palazzo della Ragione in Vicenza, Italy.

The front facade is constructed of architectural terra cotta. The building units are machine extruded and are larger than brick or facing tile. Their function is decorative rather than structural. The facade blocks, having more ornate detailing, were hand-molded. The thinner sections may be held in place by adhesion to mortar placed between the terra cotta and the backing, and the thicker sections by grout and wire anchors connected to the backing.

At the second level, ogee type arches form the entablature and are stilted with columns. The two lateral windows are enclosed by balcony grills and a double-bracketed cornice crowns the facade.

The exterior side and back wall construction is brick masonry resting on a concrete foundation. The flat roof is completed at the facade of the building with an awning of glazed tile.

- B. Description of Interior: The original floor plan consisted of five major rooms (fire truck room, hose room, restroom, treasurer's office and council chambers) on the first floor and an auditorium the full area of the building on the second floor. The interior finish is plaster and drywall.
- C. Site: The town hall faces north and is sandwiched between two late 19th century buildings. There is no landscaping, as the town hall is built out to the sidewalk fronting Main Street.

Part III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Bibliography:

Littleton Independent, April 4, 1919; June 6, 1919; July 18, 1919; August 8, 1919; August 29, 1919.

National Register of Historic Places Inventory--Nomination Form, Littleton Historical Museum, February 27, 1980.

Architectural and Historical Building Survey and Inventory Reports 2 and 3, Littleton Historical Museum, 1973 and 1974.

Historic Building Record and Evaluation, File II, Littleton Historical Museum, August, 1972.